



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

NORTHSIDE 3rd DISTRICT **The Honorable Christopher A. Hilbert** Councilman, Northside 3rd District

April 13, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-109; WC Docket 11-42**

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Thank you for your strong leadership as the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. You certainly have taken the helm at a time of much change in the way we "connect" with people. While I know it is exciting, it also has to be challenging as well.

Today I write to thank you for your efforts to modernize and reform the Lifeline Assurance program, but to also ask that you be aware that some of the proposed changes will make life much more difficult on those who can least afford it; citizens who exist below the poverty line.

Specifically, I refer to three proposed changes; to charge a monthly or one time enrollment fee, to eliminate the "self-certification" portion of the program, as well as the recommendation to cap support for low-income users. These three proposed changes would present an enormous hurdle for the qualifying consumer. This barrier seems to be directly aimed at exactly the type of end user these programs should be reaching and have been reaching.

These recommendations all seem to strike at the heart of the program. Studies have shown that people who are looking for a job have a better chance of getting one if they have access to a phone. And I know first hand in my council district how many senior citizens who live on social security or Medicaid depend on access to their doctors or emergency care. The success of this program has been due to the tough economic times and we don't need to put the rug out from under our citizens who are the most vulnerable.

Thank you for all you are doing to modernize this program; and I certainly commend your efforts to eliminate fraud, waste and abuse. However, I hope that you will not move forward with the usage fees, the elimination of self-certification or put a cap on the program.

Sincerely,

CC:
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commission Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker